

# A Study on Correlation of Risk-Taking and the Oral Production of English Majors in China

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## Abstract

Risk-taking refers to the tendency to engage in behaviors that have the potential to be harmful or dangerous, yet at the same time provides the opportunity for some kinds of outcome that can be perceived as positive. Ely (1986) and Bang (1999) have mentioned the relationship between risk-taking and oral production in the process of English learning. However, few researches have set their foot into the correlation between risk-taking of English majors and their oral production. Hence, it is indispensable to carry out this study to fill the gap. The study aims to investigate the general situation of English majors' risk-taking in oral production; how does risk-taking of English majors correlate with fluency, accuracy and complexity in oral production; what is the difference between high risk-taking and the low risk-taking of English majors in the oral production: fluency, accuracy and complexity? And if there exists some differences, how these related to risk-taking? The results show that the English majors' risk-taking is at a relatively low level; there is a positive and strong correlation between risk-taking of English majors and the two aspects of oral production: fluency, accuracy, and there is no correlation between risk-taking and complexity; there exists difference between high risk-taking and low risk-taking in oral fluency and accuracy for English majors. The higher risk-taking subjects are able to produce more fluent and accurate sentences than the low risk-taking subjects. However, no difference has been found between high risk-taking and low risk-taking in the oral production of complexity.

**Keywords:** risk-taking, oral production, accuracy, fluency, complexity

## 1. Introduction

Corder (1978) hold that risk-taking was a feature of achievement strategies rather than reduction strategies, maintaining the former one facilitates language learning. Beebe (1983) regarded that lacking of risk-taking awareness led to fossilization and willing to take risk is one of the common features for learners who are adapting at studying. Oxford (1990) advocated that it was more useful for language learners to take moderate but intelligent risks, such as wild guess rather than taking no risks at all or taking extreme risks.

In order to acquire a foreign language, especially the competence of oral production, risk-taking is regarded as helpful. Risk-taking provides students with power and courage to express themselves in another language instead of their mother tongue. Students who embrace risk-taking spirit tend to seize every chance to communicate with others in English no matter in classroom or extracurricular environment.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Definition of Risk-Taking

Risk-taking is defined as the behaviors of doing something which involves risks with the aim of achieving something in the Longman Advanced Dictionary (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2004). As the fact that studies on risk-taking are very mature and have produced fruitful results abroad, various definitions of risk-taking are proposed by many researchers abroad.

Bem (1971) considers risk-taking as a behavior that someone is willing to make something new and different

regardless of paying their attention to success or failure primarily. Sinclair (1975) regards that risk-taking is the practice of engaging in a new venture with confidence. The challenge needs you to leave your comfort zone by stretching the mind, body, emotion, spirit, or interpersonal relationship.

Beebe (1983) defined risk-taking as: an individual should make choice from different possibilities, and the result is uncertain, maybe it turns out failure. Ely (1986) further pointed out that risk-taking in foreign language acquisition refers to the tendency of taking risk when using foreign language. Their four concrete behaviors are: using new linguistic elements without hesitancy; trying to use the intricate or difficult linguistic elements; be tolerant enough to use less accurate or precise language; do not practice secretly before using new language elements.

Bang (1999) usually defines risk taking as ‘a hypothesized personality dimension reflecting the degree to which an individual is willing to undertake actions with a significant degree of risk’. He also gives his definition in spoken discourse. He defines risk-taking as learners’ initiative or voluntary participation when there is no response from the instructor’s questions. In language learning, especially in learning oral English, Bang (1999) defines risk-taking behavior as an active oral participation or involvement such as raising questions, responding to the teachers’ questions, and making comments during the classroom activities.

Richard et al. (2000) defines risk-taking as a personality factor that concerns the degree to which a person is willing to undertake actions that involve a significant degree of risk. Risk-taking is believed to be an important characteristic of successful second language learning, since the learners have to be willing to try out hunches about the new language learning and take the risk of being wrong.

According the definitions of the above researchers, it can be concluded that the concept of risk-taking contains the psychological traits of language learners, which imply their behavioral trend. More specifically speaking, students with risk-taking behaviors possess the following traits:

- (1) Willing to receive challenging tasks when there is no certain success;
- (2) Choosing tasks which involve intermediate and reasonable risk instead of excessive risk;
- (3) Sharing and advocating ideas they believe in when those ideas are unpopular;
- (4) Willing to use a critical appraisal way to assess their work or thinking and correct thinking when successfully challenged.
- (5) Willing to be incorrect and daring to take on risky tasks that might end up with failure.

In summary, risk-taking refers to the willingness to undertake extremely challenging tasks, the braveness of making mistakes and the confidence of advocating unconventional or unpopular ideas, which contributes to English language learners’ improvement of personal growth and accomplishments.

## *2.2 Definition of Oral Production*

Oral production can be produced from input and output during the interaction process in English speaking contexts to some degree.

### *2.2.1 Oral Fluency*

Skehan (1996) indicates that speaking fluency refers to the ability to produce the spoken language without undue pausing and hesitation. Too many pausing, hesitation and strain may obstruct the fluency and depress the speakers in communication.

Brown (2001) demonstrates that fluency could be best acquired by allowing the ‘stream’ of speech to ‘flow’. As some of this speech spills over beyond comprehensibility, the ‘river banks’ of instruction will channel the speech to a more purposeful way in the aspects of phonology, grammar, or discourse.

Hedge (2002) maintains that oral fluency is the ability to elicit the language elements and link units of speech together without inappropriate slowness, undue hesitation or strain. Hence it relates to oral production and it is normally reserved for speech.

### *2.2.2 Oral Accuracy*

Skehan (1996) has indicated that accuracy related to the extent to which the language produced conforms to the target language norms, i.e. whether the language is clear, articulate, grammatically and phonologically correct. According to Skehan’s definitions, accuracy is related to “how well language is produced in relation to the rule

system of the target language”.

Polio (1997) maintains that traditional concept of accuracy refers to written language, including vocabulary, morphology and syntax. Long (1998) indicates that meaning-focused activities benefit fluency, while form-focused activities benefit accuracy. Ellis (2003) points out that accuracy is a concern in traditional teaching, whose objective is to produce output of target language.

### 2.2.3 Oral Complexity

Complexity mainly concerns the utilization of interlanguage structures that are ‘cutting edge’, elaborate, and structured. In another word, complexity is the language elaboration or language ambition which is elicited by the speakers.

As Foster and Skehan (1996) mentioned, complexity is more associated with learners’ willingness to take risks to use the language that might result in errors and to restructure their interlanguage. According to Forster and Skehan (1996), it is more associated with the extent to which learners use the language forms closer to the cutting edge of interlanguage development and reflects learners’ courage to take risks by using the unfamiliar language for them.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Questions

The present study attempts to find out the answer to the following questions:

- (1) What is the general situation of English majors’ risk-taking in oral production?
- (2) How does risk-taking of English majors correlate with fluency, accuracy and complexity in the oral production?
- (3) What is the difference between high risk-taking and the low risk-taking of English majors in the oral production: fluency, accuracy and complexity? And if there exists some differences, how these related to risk-taking?

### 3.2 Subjects

The 35 full-time undergraduate English majors who are randomly selected from 3 natural classes are in their third year of the Foreign Languages College of Jiangxi Normal University. Their ages are almost between 19 and 22. Among these 35 subjects, there are 6 male (17.2%) and 29 female (82.8%). These subjects started to learn English from junior middle school now, amounting to nine years of learning English as a foreign language. As English majors, they have already grasped and strengthened the professional English knowledge in the past two year’s university learning. Moreover, the selected English majors are at the average level in language proficiency as they all have passed TEM4, thus the participants can be classified into a homogeneous group of students with reference to their learning history and English proficiency.

### 3.3 Instruments

The study will adopt the quantitative methodology, including risk-taking questionnaire to test risk-taking and methodology to measure oral production.

#### 3.3.1 Risk-Taking Questionnaire

The construction of risk-taking questionnaire is based on Ely’s Framework (Ely, 1986) and Zou’s (2011) risk-taking questions. The total scores of the questionnaire are 100, which can be divided into two parts. Part1 is ten question marks (50) and part 2 is self-evaluation marks (50).

##### (1) Question Test:

This part includes 10 questions which cover four aspects concerning risk-taking: identify who are the risk-takers among those subjects (Questions 1-2); examine the students’ activeness in oral English communication (Questions 3-5); investigate the attitude to difficulty, challenge and failure during the oral production (Questions 6-8); concern the response from peers’ evaluation (Questions 9-10).

There are five multiple choices for each question on a 5-point scale: 1= almost never true of me, 2= general not true of me, 3= somewhat true of me, 4= general true of me, 5= totally true of me. Therefore, if the subjects choose A, they will get 1 point; choosing B will get 2 points .... choosing E will get 5 points. When the 10 choices are made, the scores of the 10 questions will be added for the score A, the highest point is 50, while the

lowest point is 10.

## (2) Self-evaluation on Risk-taking

The form of self-evaluation on risk-taking is a table with four aspects are illustrated in the table: general feeling of risk-taking, see risks as misery, positive to face challenges and initiate to make challenges. The distribution of the scores for the first aspect is 4, 8, 12, 16, that is to say, if you regard yourself as a complete risk-taker, you choose the 16 scores; and 4 scores means you are not a risk-taker. The rest three aspects' scores distribution is the same: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10. All the subjects need to do is to choose the corresponding scores according to their personal situation. Adding to the scores from the four items, Score B will be gotten. The highest is 50 and the lowest is 10. Score A and Score B are the total scores of risk-taking of the 35 subjects.

### 3.3.2 Oral Production Test

The material which is used to test their oral production is the oral test of SIA (Shanghai Interpretation Accreditation). It is regarded as one of the most authoritative test to measure students' oral production. The topic is: Should college students be encouraged to take up part-time jobs? Why or why not? The same 35 subjects are allowed to prepare for 3 minutes and state their opinion for another 3 minutes. The oral utterance is timed by a stopwatch. Then the author records the subjects' oral utterance and transcribes them into written speech.

The author apply the measurement put forward by Dewaele and Pavlenko (2003) to measure oral fluency. With respect to the measurements of accuracy and complexity, Professor Zhang (2007) summarizes several measurements of accuracy and complexity based on the researches abroad, and the author select one of them to measure accuracy and complexity respectively.

Fluency= the total number of words/ the length of time the subjects' produced.

Accuracy= the total number of words/ (the total number of error words+ 1)

Complexity= types/ tokens

### 3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Data collected from the risk-taking test and oral production test are analyzed by SPSS13.0

## 4. Results and Discussion of the Research

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Risk-Taking and Oral Production

A clear descriptive table of the four variables, including risk-taking, fluency, accuracy and complexity is demonstrated before analyzing the correlation of risk-taking and the three aspects of oral production. And table 4.1 displays the description data for those four variables in the present study.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of risk-taking and oral production

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Risk-taking	35	47.00	75.00	2118.00	60.5143	6.59488
fluency	35	55.66	140.00	3685.22	105.2920	17.95066
accuracy	35	13.71	116.50	1681.65	48.0470	22.43868
complexity	35	.30	.55	15.13	.4323	.06650
Valid N (listwise)	35					

According to Table 1, in terms of risk-taking test, the maximum is 75.00, the minimum is 47.00 and the mean is 60.5143 based on the total scores of 100, which indicates that the subjects' risk-taking is at a relatively low level.

#### 4.2 Correlation between Risk-Taking and Oral Production

Table 2. The correlations between risk-taking and three indexes of oral English

		risk-taking	Fluency	accuracy	Complexity
risk-taking	Pearson Correlation	1	.700**	.427*	.200
	Sig.(2-tailed)		.000	.011	.250
	N	35	35	35	35
fluency	Pearson Correlation	.700**	1	.122	-.014
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000		.484	.815
	N	35	35	35	35
accuracy	Pearson Correlation	.427*	.122	1	.164
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.011	.484		.364
	N	35	35	35	35
complexity	Pearson Correlation	.200	-.014	.164	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.250	.815	.364	
	N	35	35	35	35

Table 2 displays the result of the correlation of risk-taking and the three aspects of the oral production, including fluency, accuracy and complexity. Firstly, risk-taking is found strongly and positively correlated to oral fluency ( $r=.700^{**}$ ,  $p<.05$ ), which means that the subjects who get high scores in risk-taking test are able to produce more fluent English sentences than those who get low scores. Secondly, there is a positively correlation between risk-taking and oral accuracy ( $r=.427^{*}$ ,  $p<.05$ ), but it is not as strong as the correlation between risk-taking and fluency. It also illustrates that those subjects who get high scores in risk-taking test can elicit more accurate sentences than the low risk-taking subjects.

Speaking of the relationship between risk-taking and complexity, there is no correlation between them ( $r=.200$ ,  $p>.05$ ). That is to say, the complexity of the sentences produced by the subjects is not influenced by their scores of risk-taking test. Subjects who get high scores in risk-taking test may produce more complex structured sentences, but they may also elicit simple oral utterance in oral production. Complexity of sentences has nothing to do with risk-taking for the subjects.

In summary, the English majors' risk-taking is positively correlated to the oral production with respect to fluency and accuracy, but is not correlated to complexity. Then the detail discussion of the correlation between risk-taking and the three variables will be elaborated as follows.

##### 4.2.1 Correlation between Risk-Taking and Fluency

Table 4.3 showed that fluency of oral production was strongly and positively correlated to risk-taking. This result corresponds to the research conducted by Zou (2011) to some extent. She studied the effect of college students' risk-taking on the oral English communicative competence. In her study, she used the questionnaires to test risk-taking and two oral production tasks from the mock oral test paper (Level-B) of PETS (the Public English Test System) to test oral production. According to the analysis with SPSS13.0, she found the positive correlation between risk-taking and fluency ( $r=.613$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and she concluded that risk-taking indeed exert an influence on oral English communicative competence in the aspect of oral fluency.

In this study, fluency of oral production refers to the total numbers of words produced by the subjects in the oral task in a given time, which means the more words the subjects produced in a given time, the more fluent oral production they will have. Based on the statistic data of table 4.3, it can be concluded that English majors who get high scores in risk-taking test produce more words than those who get low scores in risk-taking test.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1836) ever said that "don't be too timid and squeamish about your actions. All life is an experiment. The more experiments you make the better". The subjects with risk-taking always embody those

cherished qualities: passion, braveness, self-confidence and positive self-evaluation, etc. This is the reason why participants with risk-taking speak more fluent sentences in oral production.

English majors who possess risk-taking are passionate enough and willing to accept any challenges in the process of acquiring a second language, so they will grasp every chance to speak English in classroom or in the extracurricular contexts. During the process of oral communication, they are brave to express themselves and not afraid of making mistakes instead of overcaution or obsessed by comment from others. They are adept at giving themselves a positive self-evaluation after the oral production. If their speaking performance is satisfied, they will put forth their best effort to speak English well because risk-taking benefits their oral English. If their performance is merely adequate, they will analyze the causes, accumulate the experience and prepare for more practice instead of depression or giving up. With these excellent qualities, positive behaviors and learning experience, it is understandable that English majors with risk-taking elicit more fluent sentences.

In contrast, English majors without risk-taking are those who tend to be overcautious, hesitate and sensitive when they communicate with others in English. They always have a negative evaluation of themselves and are not willing to express what they would like to say and are afraid of taking new risks in the process of acquiring a language (Robins, 2001). Hence, these negative factors will stunt the English majors' oral fluency improvement to some extent.

As English instructors, being aware of the necessity of risk-taking and strengthening English majors' risk-taking is the first thing. So they need to concern about lowering English majors' affective filter in risk-taking and motivating their students to take risks actively in class. In the oral classes, the instructor need to use verbal and non-verbal communication in order to create an intimate atmosphere (eg: gesture, posture and facial expression, etc). Besides, the humor quality may help to transfer the formal atmosphere into the relaxing and comfortable atmosphere. English majors are likely to take risk-taking actively under the safe atmosphere to lessen their anxiety. Furthermore, the instructors should provide the English majors with more English activities in classroom or extracurricular contexts, such as English speech contests, English corner. These activities will arouse their motivation to take a risk in order to develop their oral English.

#### 4.2.2 Correlation between Risk-Taking and Accuracy

Table 4.3 revealed that English majors' risk-taking was also positively correlated with their oral accuracy ( $r=.427^*$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Accuracy of oral production refers to the subjects produce the accurate words or sentences in their utterance during the given time, which means the more accurate words the participants produce, the better performance in the oral production in terms of accuracy they have. In another word, learners with risk-taking will produce more accurate sentences in the oral task.

There are two reasons why learners with risk-taking will produce more accurate sentences. The first reason is the willingness to use new linguistic elements. Beebe (1983) points out that the learners with risk-taking are willing to guess, willing to appear foolish with the aim of communicating, and trying to use the target language knowledge in order to create new utterance. The English majors with risk-taking tend to use newly linguistic elements and obtain positive feedback from teachers and peers. In oral classes, students are often required or encouraged to use the newly learned words to carry out language learning tasks. However, using a newly encountered linguistic element may run the risk of making mistakes, and students without risk-taking fear that they would lose face in front of others as oral English acquisition is the face-to-face form. Thus not speaking is considered as more rewarding than speaking with possibility of failure for the learners.

Students who possess risk-taking may get positive feedback from their teachers as they are willing to use new learned linguistic elements. Those positive feedbacks would encourage them into further efforts. That is to say, they may get more input of feedback from teacher because of their willingness to use new words. As language learning is a process of accumulation, the risk-takers accumulate more as they get more feedback. Hence, they incline to make less oral mistakes in oral communication.

The second reason is the tolerance of possible linguistic incorrectness. For quite a long time in oral language learning in China, teachers attach great importance to students' accuracy in using English and students are highly concerned about the comment from their teachers and peers. This phenomenon brings about the effect that many students are unwilling to take risk or appear foolish by making mistakes in the classroom, and a majority of English majors mind their incorrectness and inexactitude in using the language. Risk-takers mind the incorrectness of oral utterance, but they can tolerate the linguistic incorrectness and are willing to reveal their

mistakes.

In summary, the instructor need to give the students positive feedback, and create a relaxing environment for English majors in class. They tend to be more active to participate in classroom activities if their instructor correct the errors in an indirect and gentle way and help them to aware that making mistakes is an unavoidable and natural phenomenon in the process of acquiring a foreign language. Ely (1986) also stressed to create a psychologically secure environment for learners before expecting the students to take linguistic risks. It also corresponds to Ellsworth's claim that conscious and unconscious assessments of the power relations and safety of the situation affect the students' participation (Wang, 2002).

#### 4.2.3 Correlation between Risk-Taking and Complexity

Different from the two previous two results, there is no correlation between risk-taking and complexity ( $r=.200$   $p>.05$ ) according to table 4.3. It can be concluded that the low risk-taking subjects might produce more complex sentences than those with high risk-taking. Therefore, risk-taking doesn't exert an influence on complexity in the oral production task. This research result could be explained by the following reasons:

The first reason is the different types of tasks. Skehan (1996) ever pointed out that complexity emphasized the complexity was the structure of language, which indicated that learners use more elaborate, complicated language structure and various sentences to express themselves. Skehan and Foster (1996) adopted individual task, presentation task and decision-making task for the sake of exploring the type's task and the influence on learner's oral production, which turned out that the complexity of individual task is the lowest. Xu (2005) studied the three tasks: narrating the story with picture, topic discussion and case study, finding out that there are considerable difference between different tasks in terms of accuracy and complexity. Therefore, the correlation of risk-taking and complexity varies with the different types of tasks.

The second reason is the degree of the task difficulty. The difficulty level could be divided into three parts: low level, moderate level and high level. The more difficult the task is, the less complex sentences can be produced by the subjects. This result also corresponded to the research by Lu and Sun (2009). They analyzed the language output produced by 14 non-English majors based on college English oral task, studying if the simple task and the complicated task related to topical familiarity influence the complexity of oral production. There are two questions for their research: (1) Do the simple task and the complicated task cause the difference of oral complexity? (2) What are the different language characteristics under the two kinds of tasks? They found that the difficulty of tasks exerts a deep influence on the complexity of oral production and it demonstrated the features of diversification with different types of tasks. Hence, complexity of the oral production is more related to the difficulty level of tasks rather than risk-taking.

The last reason is the language contexts, which will influence the subjects' oral production. For instance, a risk-taker might elicit less complex oral production under one given language context, while students without risk-taking might produce more complicated utterance under the same context, because their individual situation such as mood will influence their oral complexity. Thus language context would affect the complexity of oral task performance.

In a word, complexity of oral production can be influenced by different types of language tasks, difficulty level of language tasks and language contexts instead of the factor risk-taking. Moreover, the participants' individual language proficiency also influences their oral complexity. There is no doubt that students with high language proficiency are able to elicit more advanced and elaborate discourses than those with low language proficiency.

#### 4.3 Differences of High and Low Risk-Taking Subjects in Oral Production

The following table 4.4 displays the independent sample test of the higher and lower participants' risk-taking in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity. The following analysis is about the third research question: What is the difference between high risk-taking and the low risk-taking of English majors in the oral production: fluency, accuracy and complexity? And if there exists some differences, how these related to risk-taking?

Table 3. Independent sample test

	Levene's Test for quality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std.Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
risk-taking	.366	.568	9.975	22	.000	14.00000	1.40346	1.08940	6.91060
			9.975	21.814	.000	14.00000	1.40346	1.08797	6.91203
fluency	.689	.415	4.272	22	.000	25.58583	5.98987	3.16361	8.00806
			4.272	20.551	.000	25.58583	5.98987	3.11265	8.05902
accuracy	7.845	.010	2.834	22	.010	27.89083	9.84205	7.47968	8.30199
			2.834	13.624	.014	27.89083	9.84205	6.72703	9.05464
complexity	.441	.513	1.730	22	.098	.04417	.02553	-.00879	.09712
			1.730	21.959	.098	.04417	.02553	-.00879	.09713

The author adopted the first 12 highest scores and the last 12 lowest scores in risk-taking test to analyze the difference between high and low risk-taking in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity by the use of SPSS13.0. The result of the above data has been presented on the following table 4.4, which brought out the conclusion that there is obvious difference among high and low risk-taking subjects in terms of fluency ( $t=9.975$ ,  $p=0.000$ ,  $0.000 < .05$ ) and accuracy ( $t=4.272$ ,  $p=0.000$ ,  $0.005 < .05$ ), but no significant difference has been found in the aspect of complexity ( $t= 1.730$ ,  $p=0.098$ ,  $0.098 > .05$ ). That is to say, the higher level of risk-taking, the better performance in accuracy and fluency, but there is no significant difference in the aspect of complexity. Then the result and the reason will be analyzed in detail as the following parts:

The first significant result is that the higher risk-taking and lower risk-taking are obviously different with regard to the aspect of oral fluency ( $t=9.975$ ,  $p=0.000$ ,  $0.000 < .05$ ). In another word, the high risk-taking subjects could produce more fluent utterance and sentences than those low risk-taking subjects, showing that the high risk-taking subjects seize more chance to practice their oral English in curricular contexts and extracurricular contexts. Absolutely, with these frequently practicing behaviors, high risk-taking English majors can elicit more fluent sentences once they get opportunity to speak English. Moreover, as the risk-takers, they embody good qualities such as passionate, confidence, high self-esteem and positive attitude to themselves. Therefore, those high risk-taking subjects can feel more comfortable and relaxed than those low risk-taking ones, while the low risk-taking subjects would easily feel nervous or timid to express their opinion in public.

The second meaningful founding is that the high risk-taking subjects are apparently different from the low risk-taking subjects in terms of accuracy ( $t=4.272$ ,  $p=0.000$ ,  $0.005 < .05$ ). It means that the higher level risk-taking of the subjects, the more accurate sentences they will produce in the oral task, in another word, the high level risk-taking subjects produce more accurate sentences than the low level subjects in the oral task. For example, the high risk-taking subjects have high evaluation about themselves and they are not afraid of making mistakes in front of strangers. After accumulating for a long time, their level of accuracy have already improved a lot so that they can perform better than those English majors who have seldom make use of chances to practice English or are overcautious during the process of speaking English.

In terms of complexity, there are no obvious difference between high level and low level risk-taking subjects ( $t= 1.730$ ,  $p=0.098$ ,  $0.098 > .05$ ). The high risk-taking subjects may produce less complex sentences, while the low risk-taking subjects may produce more elaborate sentences in the oral task. Many factors lead to the result, including the types of oral tasks, the difficult level of oral task, language contexts and subjects' language proficiency rather than the risk-taking factor among the subjects in the study.

## 5. Conclusions

According to the major findings of the present study, some practical and useful pedagogical implications for oral English teachers and students could be summarized. From the part of English teachers, they are supposed to inform the students of the significance of risk-taking and encouraging them to participate in the communication activities in class; ask students to use new elements and encourage them to use difficult linguistic elements, which enable them to master the new learned knowledge quickly; Create a secure and intimate atmosphere to reduce students' anxiety, enabling them to express their ideas freely. From the part of the students, they need to realize the significance of risk-taking and try to seize more opportunities to participate in the communication activities in class or extracurricular contexts; be aware of making mistake is inevitable, so it is unnecessary to be afraid of making mistakes in communication process; be aware of the importance of cooperative learning because they tend to suffer less anxiety than controlled learning.

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